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THE MODEST RAINDROP

BY

H. G. KEENE.

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THE MODEST RAINDROP

AND OTHER FABLES

SUB · HOC · SIGNO · VINCES

THE

MODEST RAINDROP

And other Fables

FOR OLD AND YOUNG

TRANSLATED FROM THE PERSIAN

BY THE LATE REV. H. G. KEENE, M.A.

SOMETIME PERSIAN AND ARABIC PROFESSOR OF THE EAST INDIAN COLLEGE, HAILEYBURY, HERTS

A NEW EDITION

EDITED BY HIS DAUGHTER KATHERINE KEENE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAMUEL FRY

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TO

My Sister and Brothers

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF

The Translator

PREFACE.

THE following collection of Persian Fables for young and old was published by my father in 1833, while he was Professor of Persian at Haileybury College. In presenting anew to the readers of a later age this slight memorial of one whose memory is still dear to some few living, I have taken for my title the subject of the fable which closes the volume, in the hope that something of the aspiration expressed in its last words may yet be realised; that "this little book, unfit to struggle in the great waters of literature, and dropping aside into some silent pool of obscurity, may find shelter in the recesses of some poetic mind, and come forth again in a future age, to receive the applause of its transmuted lustre."

The illustrations to this edition of the tales first collected by my father for the amusement and instruction of his own children, have been contributed by a friendly artist, whose performances may be left, I trust, to speak for themselves.

PREFACE

TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION.

ALL these Fables are, what they profess to be, taken from the Persian; and with the exception of one, the *Shoe-Finder*, which is given on oral authority, may be recognised by those who are but beginners in that language. Great liberties, however, have been taken in the translation, by adapting the colloquies and incidents to our own notions and usages; the same liberty, in fact, which the Persian authors have made use of in embellishing the stories.

They were first collected for the amusement and instruction of my own children, and seemed to answer that purpose; they may therefore be found pleasing and useful to others.

HAILEYBURY, 1833.

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THE MEDDLING MONKEY.

THERE was a meddling, inquisitive Monkey, who was always prying into business that did not belong to him, and looking into things that he had nothing to do with. One morning, in his rambles, he got into a sawyer's shed, and was led by curiosity to watch what the man was doing. Now it chanced that the sawyer had got a large piece of timber, and the way he went to work was

this: first he sawed a few inches, and then drove a wedge into the cleft at the end of the timber, which kept the timber open and let the saw pass easily.

When he had gone farther, and found the wood sticking to the saw, he drove in another wedge at the back of the saw, which opened the cleft wider, and the first wedge came out easily. The Monkey sat with his eyes half shut, delighted with the novelty of the sight; and you might have fancied him asleep if it had not been for a slight movement in his paws, which followed every motion of the sawyer.

At last the man went away to dinner, and as soon as he was out of sight the Monkey jumped up and took his place, and was determined to try his hand at the work; but unfortunately he pulled out the one wedge before he drove in the other; and the two sides of the timber springing together caught hold of his tail, which had dropped between. It would have moved the hardest heart to hear the poor creature lament and scream, while he kept thinking how foolish he had been, and saying,

"There is a man for every work and a work for every man. I should have been content with climbing trees and picking fruit, and not have meddled with carpenters' work."

Anybody but the sawyer would have felt for the poor beast; but he was a cruel, passionate man. As soon as he came back he was violently enraged to find that his work had been meddled with, and began to kick and beat the poor Monkey, who, making a violent effort, at last got free, but left his tail behind him.

This should teach little children not to play with carpenters' tools, nor the gardener's shears and scythe; and make them remember not to meddle with other people's concerns, when they grow up.

THE HARE WHO TOLD FALSEHOODS.

AS a hungry Wolf was running across the plain, in search of food, he saw a Hare fast asleep under a thicket, and lost in forgetfulness of all around her; he thought what a nice meal she would make, and began to creep slowly up, with his great mouth wide open, ready to snap her up, but his panting awoke her, and she jumped up and tried to run away. The Wolf was so close to her, though, that she could not get off, so she stood trembling before him, half dead with fright. "Ho! ho! my dear," said the Wolf, "have I found you at last? I have been longing to see you, and have looked for you under every bush, till I was quite tired." "O dear!" said the Hare, "I hope you will not think of eating up such a poor little creature as I am; I should be but a mouthful for such a great and mighty animal as you are. But I know

of a fine fat Fox in the next wood, that would make a nice breakfast for you; and if you please to come along with me, I think I can entice him into your clutches."

The greedy Wolf was so charmed with what he heard, that he agreed to follow the Hare, and so away they went to the wood together. When they got to the hole where the Fox lived, the Wolf stayed outside, while the Hare went a little way in, and very politely wished the Fox good-morning. "What a time it is," said the Fox, "since I have had the pleasure of seeing you! I hope you have not been ill." "Thank you," said the Hare, "I have been quite well; but, really, the care of a large family takes up so much time that I can hardly get out to nibble a bit of fresh grass upon the hill, and never think of making a call, and besides, we have had to move lately, for we were sadly plagued by a pack of hounds which had got into our neighbourhood. But I have just stepped in to let you know that a friend of mine, who has heard a great deal of your wisdom and sagacity, wishes very much for

your advice in a great difficulty; and I hope, out of friendship to me, you will allow me to introduce him."

The Fox was a great deal too cunning to be taken in by fine words; and saw plainly enough that there was some mischief under all these soft speeches, but he pretended not to see through it, that he might catch the Hare in her own trap. So he gave her plenty of compliments, and said "You do me too much honour. I shall be proud to see your friend, only just give me time to sweep the house, and put things a little in order for him."

So away went the Hare, delighted at the idea of having imposed upon the Fox, and told the Wolf all that had passed; and there they stood, waiting to be called in; he thinking of the fine meal he should make, and she hoping to get out of danger.

Now the Fox, with a great deal of forethought, had long ago made a secret passage, by which he could at any time escape, and had dug a pit in the middle of his dwelling, and covered it with some sticks and dry grass. As soon as the Hare was

gone, he put the sticks in order, so that they might give way at the least touch, and shook up the grass a little, and then getting into the secret passage, called out to them to walk in. The Hare made a jump, and the Wolf made a bound, and both alighting upon the sticks, tumbled headlong into the pit, while the Fox scampered off. As soon as the Wolf was recovered from his surprise, he seized the Hare, and accusing her of having laid this trap for him, swallowed her up in an instant.

You see then how foolish it was of the Hare to tell falsehoods, or try to bring the Fox into danger, for after all her wickedness she was eaten up by the Wolf. And, depend upon it, we shall always find it better to meet every difficulty and misfortune with courage, resignation, and truth; falsehoods are sure to be detected at last; and we either make the difficulty greater, or fall into others quite as bad.

THE HEN AND THE PIGEON.

HEN, who was strutting about a farmyard with a brood of a dozen or more chickens, said to a Pigeon, who passed by, "I wonder you never have more than two young ones at a time, and always keep them shut up. You see what a brood I have got, and how soon I teach them to shift for themselves." The Pigeon flung back her head, and replied: "You will observe, ma'am, that our young ones are always fed out of our own crop, and that we never allow them to touch anything but the sweetest grains, which we collect ourselves, while you have nothing to do but to scratch on a dunghill, and your chickens are satisfied with any filth they meet with. My mate and I find that two are as many as our crops will maintain; but with half a dunghill you may feed fifty."

Those who care not by what means they live themselves are ready enough to laugh at the honest frugality of those who are more scrupulous.

THE PARTRIDGE AND THE QUAIL.

A RAVEN, who had reached an extreme old age, and felt that his days were drawing to a close, called his children about him and related such passages of his long and eventful life as might

most strongly impress upon their minds those lessons of prudence which he formerly taught them. The point, however, to which he now more particularly called their attention, brought the following story to his recollection :—

"When I was young I used to live in an old tree on the side of a hill, and a Partridge had made her nest close by. Some years passed on, and a certain degree of intimacy grew up between us, so that I felt sincere regret when she suddenly disappeared, and was so long absent that I supposed she had come to an untimely end. I had some thoughts, indeed, of quitting the place, though it was dear to me as the spot where many of you had been brought up, for it was become very lonely since the loss of my neighbour, when a Quail, passing by, seemed struck with the beauty of the situation, and took possession of the empty nest. The civilities, which I naturally offered to the stranger, led to a farther acquaintance; and in course of which I saw so much to admire that I soon began to take delight in her conversation; and was consoled for the loss of my former friend.

"Some time after this, to my great joy and surprise, the Partridge suddenly returned; and I began to indulge in the prospect of passing the rest of my days in the society of two persons, to whom I was sincerely attached. But a fierce contention soon arose between them about the nest. The Partridge urged that she had built it, and occupied it for years; the Quail maintained that she had abandoned that right by deserting it; that the nest then became common property, and was now hers by use and occupation. The matter was at length referred to me; but I refused to interfere in a case so difficult, and because I was equally attached to them both.

"The Partridge at length proposed that they should carry the suit in due form before an ancient Cat, who held a great reputation in those parts for his eminent knowledge of the law, and the exact austerity of his secluded life. He would pass whole days with half-closed eyes, in profound meditation and strict fasting; and nothing seemed to disturb his contemplations but a regard for the duty of perform-

ing his ablutions; and it was well known that all his nights were passed in painful vigilance, when he scarcely even indulged in the repose of slumber. The Quail agreed; and I resolved to go with them, and see the issue of the affair. When we first appeared before the Cat, he seemed to be so completely lost in thought, that even the angry disputants were struck with awe, and compelled to be silent. At length, opening his eyes and looking round upon us with meekness, he asked our business, in a tone of benevolence which at once engaged our confidence and esteem.

"This was enough for the angry parties, who began both at once to state their case with so much clamour, that it was impossible to make it out. The Cat with great solemnity, desired them to proceed in due order, that the plaintiff should first state her case, and the defendant then make her reply. When this had been done, and the bystanders were anxiously looking for the decision of the judge, he slowly rose and said, 'The infirmities of age are coming fast upon me, and I am rather hard of hearing: this

seems an intricate case, and I don't recollect any precedent; I would gladly hear you again; come close to me, I pray you.'

"They ran up eagerly, vying with each other who should reach him first: when suddenly darting forward, he laid a paw upon each, and drawing them to his bosom, finished their contention by putting an end to their life."

Now, from this I would have you learn, that it is better to submit to a loss and have done with it, than to throw yourself by contention into the hands of another; and be upon your guard against the wiles of those who affect a reputation for extraordinary strictness and austerity.

THE FOX AND THE DRUM.

IT chanced one fine summer's morning, as a hungry Fox was prowling about a village, that he espied a little chicken scratching up some seeds in a garden; and he was just going to spring upon her when he was startled by a terrible noise from a tree over his head. When he looked up he saw a great drum, which some children had hung up in it; and whenever the wind blew, the branches struck upon the parchment and the drum made a noise. As he had never seen such a thing before, he was lost in astonishment; but finding that it moved, alarm soon gave way to greediness, and he began to think from the voice, that it must be some animal, and judging from the shape that it could be nothing but flesh and fat, he resolved to attack it.

He got up the tree, and crawled along the branch; but when he reached the drum he could make

nothing of it: the sides were too hard; and when he tried to bite the face, he was in danger of tumbling over. At last, however, after great trouble, he managed to stick in one tooth, and tore it open; but found to his sorrow that he had got nothing but empty wood and skin for his pains.

This may teach us not to trust to mere sound and outward appearances, and to wait till we know the meaning of things before we rely upon them; above all not to fling away small enjoyments that we are sure of, in pursuit of some great but uncertain advantage.

THE WOLF AND THE FOX WHO WENT TO ROB THE GARDEN.

A WOLF and a Fox had agreed to go and rob a garden, which was full of fine grapes, melons, and every sort of delicious fruit; but the wall was so high that they could not tell how to get in. At length the Fox proposed that the Wolf should stand up against the wall, and that he would get upon his shoulders and clamber over, and bring him back some of the fruit. The Wolf agreed to it, and the Fox in this manner got into the garden; but he was soon so completely taken up with the fine treat which he had found, that he forgot his hungry friend outside, and did not even observe the gardener coming up, till he felt the weight of a long hoe upon his back, which set him off in a prodigious hurry, not knowing, however, which way to run, as there was no good-natured Wolf to serve him for a ladder;

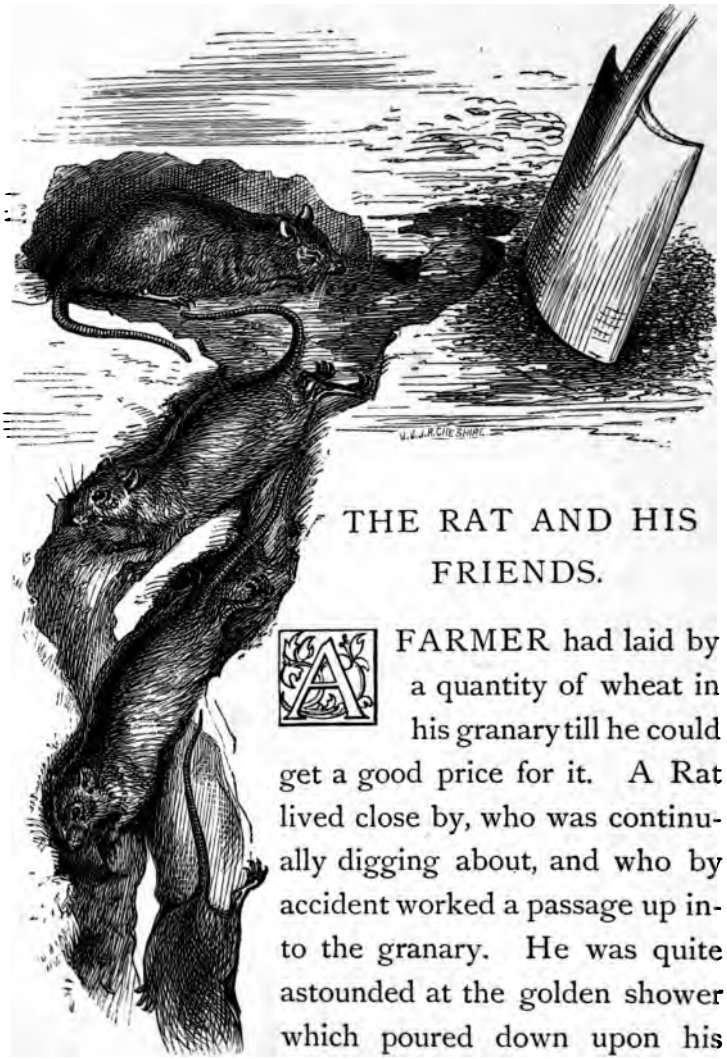
but as he was scampering along through the bushes, to avoid the brickbats, with which the man kept pelting him, he came to the door that had been left open, and joyfully escaped to the open plain.

A few days afterwards he fell in again with the Wolf, who would hardly speak to him, after the very unhandsome manner in which he felt he had been treated. The Fox, however, managed to cajole him with some idle excuse of the wall being too high to carry the fruit up, and of his having been forced to hide himself all day and scramble up the best way he could, in the dead of night. So they made up their quarrel, and set off together upon another marauding expedition; the Fox, however, having secretly made up his mind that he would take care to secure a safe retreat before he again ventured into the garden. After a great deal of careful examination they found out, behind some thick bushes, a hole in the wall, just big enough for the lank and hungry Wolf to squeeze through; and it would have been a diverting sight to see the Wolf

sticking his fangs into the rich melons, munching them up, and growling with rage when he had half-choked himself with the skin; while the Fox went dancing about on his hind legs and jumping up at the fine peaches and rich clusters of grapes.

But there is no enterprise without danger, and no pleasure without pain. The snarls of the Wolf, and the rustling of the branches had caught the ears of the gardener, who came slily up to see what was the matter, and who burst out upon the thieves as soon as he discovered them. The Wolf was the first to perceive him, and being nearest to the hole, made off for it with all speed; but alas! he was so swelled out with his voracious meal, that it was now too narrow for him, and he stuck in the middle. The gardener left him there, to all appearance dead with the blows he laid upon him, and then turned to pursue the Fox, who, having no means of escape, paid for his offences by a cruel death; and the Wolf took advantage of the opportunity to extricate himself with many painful struggles from his dangerous position.

You see, then, that the Fox, with all his cunning, met with the just punishment of his falsehood and theft; and that the Wolf, too, got properly chastised for joining in the robbery. If they had been content with their allotted food in the forest, they would not have fallen into this misfortune.



THE RAT AND HIS FRIENDS.

A FARMER had laid by a quantity of wheat in his granary till he could get a good price for it. A Rat lived close by, who was continually digging about, and who by accident worked a passage up into the granary. He was quite astounded at the golden shower which poured down upon his

head; and as soon as this vast accession of wealth became known, visits of congratulation were paid by all the neighbourhood. His head was quite turned with the flattering compliments that were paid him; and he kept open house for a circle of friends, who professed the warmest attachment to him, and who declared that they could not find any pleasure equal to his conversation.

But there arose a famine in the land, and the farmer took the opportunity to sell his wheat. It was after a more plentiful entertainment than usual, and when the Rat, overcome with the fatigue of replying to the politeness of his guests, had just dropped asleep, that the company were disturbed by a strange noise overhead; one of them, stepping out to see what was the matter, came back in all haste, and told the rest that the granary was already empty, and that it appeared dangerous to remain where they were. The place was soon cleared of all but the sleeping host, who awoke from dreams of luxury and honour, to find himself abandoned to poverty and neglect.

Rely not upon the companions of your pleasures; trust not the associates of your health and prosperity; it is only in the hour of adversity, that we learn the sincerity of our friends.

THE FOX AND HIS CUB.

A YOUNG Fox asked his father if he could not teach him some trick to defeat the dogs, if he should fall in with them.

The father had grown grey in a long life of depredation and danger, and his scars bore witness to his narrow escapes in the chase, or his less honourable encounters with the faithful guardians of the hen-roost. He replied with a sigh, "After all my experience, I am forced to confess that the best trick is—to keep out of their way."

The safest mode of dealing with a quarrelsome person is to keep out of his way.

THE ABSTEMIOUS FOX AND THE COVETOUS HUNTSMAN.

HUNTSMAN had long watched a Fox whose fur was so beautiful that he thought if he could but catch him, he might sell his skin for a good price. At last he found out the hole where he lived, and making a pitfall close by, he covered it with sticks and earth, and laid a dead hare upon the top. When the Fox came out as usual to look for food, he was attracted by the scent, and being very hungry, was strongly tempted to seize upon the hare; but when he looked more attentively, and found that the hare was dead, he began to have his suspicions of some trick; for he thought it was not very likely that any of the wild beasts would kill a hare and leave it there for him. "No, no," said he; "when there are two ways before you never follow that in which there may be danger; of two evils choose the least. I am terribly hungry, to be sure, but that

may be safely cured by catching something for myself; but if once I fall into a trap, I shall never get out alive again." So he resolved to withstand the temptation, and take his chance of what he might pick up.

Now this happened in one of those countries where there are tigers, and one of these great fierce animals coming by shortly afterwards, rushed headlong upon the bait, and tumbled into the pit. The huntsman, who had hid himself in a tree close by, was quite pleased at hearing the crash of the sticks and the fall of the animal, and thought, to be sure, he had now got the Fox; so without farther delay or hesitation, he came down, jumped into the pit to seize his prey; and the enraged tiger tore him to pieces.

Here you see how the Fox avoided danger by resisting temptation, and choosing to go hungry rather than do what he thought might hurt him; and how the huntsman got killed, because he was so greedy of gain, that he never stopped to look who was in the pit, before he jumped into it.

THE JUST KING.

NE of the Kings of Persia, who is famous in history for his exact justice, was once out hunting, when finding himself hungry he ordered the people to dress a deer that they had just taken. When all was nearly ready, they found that they had forgotten to bring any salt with them; so they sent a lad off to fetch some from a village at a little distance. The King overheard them, and calling to the boy said, "and mind you take money to pay for it." The attendants expressed their surprise at his thinking of such trifles, and asked what harm there could be in taking a handful of salt. The King replied, "All the evil that now troubles the earth first began in such trifles, till by degrees it grew to its present height; and if I take the salt, my officers will perhaps seize the cow."

There are many people who do not think it worth while to attend to what they are doing, except upon great and important occasions; forgetting that happiness and virtue consist in those trifling occurrences, of which human life is made up.

THE SCORPION AND THE TORTOISE.

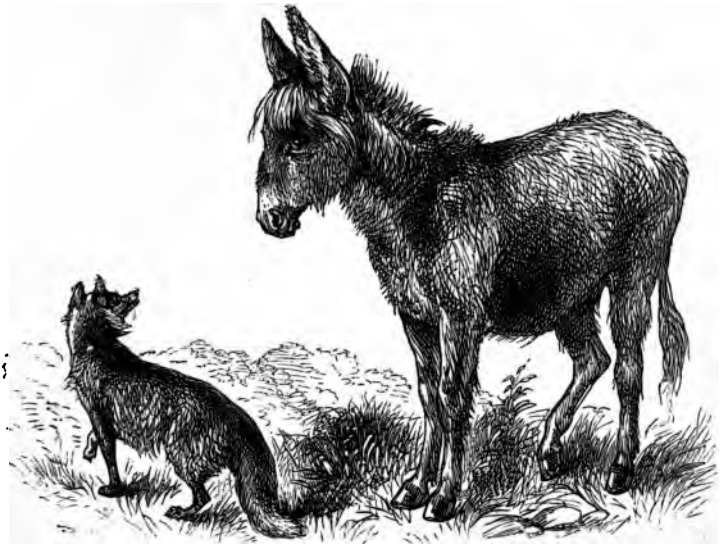
A SCORPION once determined to go and travel; he was tired, he said, of passing all his days on the same spot, and seeing no change but a move now and then from one stone to another; and besides, he did not feel well, and wanted change of air. So he set off one fine day, and was much pleased with all the fine things that he saw, and wondered that people should talk so much about the difficulties of a journey. At last, however, he came to the bank of a broad and rapid river, and was quite at a loss what to do; he saw no means of getting on, and was quite vexed at the thought of turning back. A Tortoise, who had just been laying her eggs in the sand, observed the mournful countenance of the traveller, and, politely nodding her head, asked if she could be of any service to him. The Scorpion

told her his history, and begged she would put him in the way of geting a piece of wood to make a raft of. "There is not such a thing to be had," said the Tortoise, "for love or money; it is nothing but a sandy desert for many miles, and you will hardly find a twig that would shelter an ant; but I'll tell you what I'll do; I am so sorry for your distress that I'll take you over upon my own back." The Scorpion was delighted with so kind an offer, and could not find words to express his gratitude.

He was soon seated upon the back of the benevolent Tortoise, who, plunging with unusual briskness into the water, exerted her little feet with surprising activity, to perform her promise; so that all who knew her sedate and solemn ways, wondered what could have put her into such a bustle. But she had not gone far before she was startled by a strange tapping which she felt upon her back, and thinking the stranger might be frightened, or perhaps a little sea-sick, she kindly stopped to ask what he was about. "It is nothing," said he "but a little trick I've got of working my sting; I cannot, for

the life of me, help it, and often, when I can find nothing else I sting my own back; but you need not mind it, for it will not do you any harm through your shell." The good-natured Tortoise was so shocked to hear that anybody could be so malicious, and so fond of mischief, that she resolved to rid the world and herself of the torment of such a temper; so diving to the bottom, she left the venomous reptile to perish in the water.

And from this you may learn that people who indulge in bad temper are as great a plague to themselves as they are to others, and make everybody their enemies; such people are only fit to live alone, which, if the Scorpion had done, he would not have been drowned by the Tortoise.



THE FOX AND THE ASS.

A LION was old and fell sick, and had no strength to go out hunting, which was a bad job for the Fox, who waited upon him and used to live upon the remains of his prey. One day, when the pains of hunger had overcome his dread of the king of beasts, he began to complain of his sufferings, and boldly asked the Lion why he never stirred from home. The Lion frankly confessed that his strength was consumed by illness, and that the

physicians had told him that there was no cure for his disorder but the ears and heart of a donkey; and then, with a heavy groan, he added, "But those rebels are all entered into the service of my greatest enemy—man—and I have no longer the power to go so far in pursuit of them, nor the activity to attack them when protected by their owners;" to which the Fox replied, "Let that give your majesty no uneasiness; I will undertake to bring an ass within your reach if you will only promise to bestow the rest of the carcase upon your starving attendants." The Lion gave his royal word, and the Fox set off for a pond where he had often seen a washerman at work, and his donkey grazing by the side.

As soon as he came near he put on a look of condolence, and said, "Why do you hang down your ears and look so dismal? and why do you turn your tail to everybody, as if you were ashamed to look them in the face?" The poor Ass, astonished to hear himself addressed in so kind a tone, dropped a thistle that he was munching, and said: "I am weary of this life of hardship; day after day it is the

same eternal round of burdens and blows; they give me neither rest nor food; if I bear it I am despised for a stupid beast; if I resent it I am kicked for my obstinacy; this is the only comfortable hour that I know out of the whole four-and-twenty, and that is frequently disturbed by the mischievous children, who will have a ride." The Fox said, "I wonder you put up with it: why don't you run away?" To which the Ass sorrowfully replied, "And where can I go to? My whole race are in the same slavery; we are known all over the world for being the most steady, patient, and laborious beasts upon the face of the earth; so that wherever I go they will lay hold of me, and set me to work. If labour and sorrow must needs be my lot, I may as well make up my mind to my present conditions; I may change for the worse." "As you please," said the Fox, "but I do not see why you should go near the men; you may go off to the wilderness, and enjoy perfect liberty and plenty of food. I could show you a place where several of your tribe have taken refuge, and now live unmolested."

In short, the Fox said so many fine things about liberty and the wild joys of a woodland life, that the poor Ass was quite deluded with the idea; so begging the Fox to lead the way, he kicked up his heels in contempt of all tyranny, and went off at full speed. When they reached the wood the Fox contrived an excuse for leaving him alone, while he went to prepare the Lion, and then fetched him suddenly into the presence of the sick monarch. As soon as the Lion saw him he sprang upon him; but his strength failed him, and the blow fell without effect.

The Ass was quite satisfied with this sample of freedom of the woods, and, returning without delay to the service of the washerman, resolved to complain no more of the hardships of his condition.

A few days after the Fox met him again, and with plausible excuses for the awkward accident, renewed his praises of freedom and railing against oppression. "All that is very fine," said the Ass, "and may do for those who know no better; but, to my mind, the cudgel of the washerman is better than the claws of the Lion."

We are never content, but always looking for some change to get rid of our ills; and when the change comes we find it but a change of ills. Patience makes the burthen light.

THE KING WHO LEARNED TO BE JUST.

THERE is a story told of a King, who was remarkable for the violence and cruelty of his government, so that the people prayed heartily for his death. One day he went out hunting, and at his return caused a proclamation to be made, that he was become sensible of his errors, and was resolved henceforth to rule in gentleness and justice; and this promise he kept so faithfully, that his subjects gave him the surname of *the Just.* Some years afterwards one of his favourite ministers took an opportunity of asking him what had produced that great change in his character. The King, with great kindness, thus explained it:—"You may remember I had been out to hunt the day that the proclamation was made. One of the dogs strayed from the pack in pursuit of a fox, and bit him through

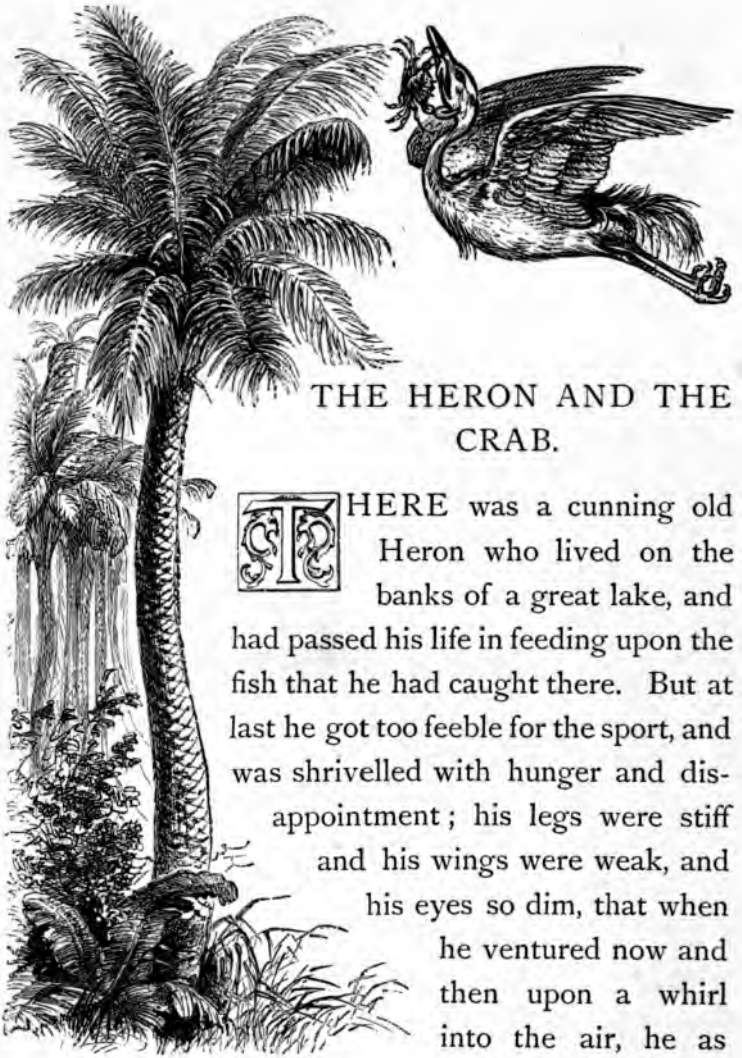
the bone of the leg; the poor fox went limping to his hole, and the dog set off at full speed to rejoin the pack. One of my footmen wantonly threw stones at the dog, and broke *his* leg; and a runaway horse passing by at the time, and mistaking the motion of the man's arm for an attempt to catch him, kicked out and broke *his* leg; and the horse, frightened at the shout that was raised, and dashing off to a wood, slipped his foot into a hole, and his leg was broken. I was forcibly struck with this chain of retribution, and I began to consider with myself what a load of evil I was heaping up to fall one day upon my own head; and this it was which produced that immediate change in my conduct."

And thus it is in life: no man can do a cruel or unjust, or even a foolish action, without suffering from the very consequences, which sooner or later it is sure to produce.

THE GREEDY FOX.

AS a hungry Fox was prowling about the woods in search of food, he met with the skin of an animal, which some wild beasts had devoured; and was quite pleased with such a piece of good fortune. In his way home he passed by a common, where some geese were feeding, with an active boy to look after them. As soon as his greedy eyes fell upon so rich and alluring a prey, he dropped the skin in contempt, and sat lurking behind a bush, till he thought the boy had dropped asleep. But the vigilant boy had watched him all the time, and soon defeated his schemes by a well-aimed blow from his trusty cudgel. The disappointed Fox ran limping back to look for the neglected skin, but a watchful kite had taken advantage of his absence to carry it off for her young.

It would have been better for the Fox if he had been content with the skin; and it will be better for us to be satisfied with what is prepared for us; those who neglect the enjoyments that are within their reach, to pursue after something better, will often lose both the one and the other.



THE HERON AND THE CRAB.

THERE was a cunning old Heron who lived on the banks of a great lake, and had passed his life in feeding upon the fish that he had caught there. But at last he got too feeble for the sport, and was shrivelled with hunger and disappointment; his legs were stiff and his wings were weak, and his eyes so dim, that when he ventured now and then upon a whirl into the air, he as

often pounced down upon a weed or a rock as upon a fish.

So he began to think seriously what he should do to keep a little life in his body, and resolved at last, as his strength was failing and his faculties decayed, to have recourse to stratagem. With this view he went early one fine day to the edge of the lake, and sat down weeping and sighing as if some great misfortune had happened to him. A large Crab, who had gone to sleep in a nice bed of reeds close by, alarmed at the lamentation, began to wonder what had happened, and as soon as she saw the Heron, crawled up with great kindness, and politely inquired into the cause of his grief. "Alas!" said the Heron, "we are undone, and there is nothing but ruin before us. It is not for myself that I am so unhappy; I am old, and in the course of nature could not live long, and what does it signify whether I go a few days sooner or later? perhaps, indeed, the sooner the better; for then I shall escape the evil days that are coming. But I grieve for these poor fish, whom I have watched

over so carefully all my life, and it makes me sad to think of their hard fate." "Bless me!" said the Crab, in great agitation; "why, what is going to happen? Surely they are not going to dry up the lake?" "Almost as bad," replied the Heron; "but I'll tell you how it is, and you may rely upon what I say; and then you shall judge for yourself. It was but this morning that I saw a couple of poaching fellows, that I have long had my eye upon, stop just under the rock that is behind us, and begin whispering together as if they were after no good. I happened to be perched just above them, so I kept my head under my wing and listened. 'I wonder,' says one, 'if there are many fish in this lake.' 'Plenty,' says the other; 'but no one comes here. I know another lake, where there is much more; let us go and secure them first, and then we can come back and settle these at our leisure!'

"Now I have had a great deal of experience; and I know these to be two as desperate hands as you'll meet with anywhere. They will be as good as their word, you may depend upon it; they will

be here in less than a month, and there is not a fish in the place that will see the next new moon after that."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the Crab, rattling her claws in anxiety; "why, then, I may as well look after my family and get them out of mischief." "I think so, indeed," replied the Heron; "and I advise you to lose no time."

Away went the Crab, full of bustle and alarm; but not being able to resist the pleasure of being the first to tell such important news, she took to the water.

The first fish she met with was an aged trout, who, knowing her to be as arrant a gossip as sea or land could boast, pretended not to see her, but she caught him by the fin, and made him hear it all; and then nothing would serve him but she must repeat it all from first to last. This she willingly did; and finding the importance that it gave her, failed not to embellish her tale with many alarming particulars which her own fears had suggested. By the time she had finished, a heap of small fry, who had listened to her first account, had spread the news,

with omissions and additions, to every corner of the lake. The terror and confusion increased every moment. "There is a hole in the lake," said one, "and there won't be a drop of water left." "It is a volcano," said another, "and we shall be boiled alive;" while those who knew more of the matter never heard a swallow dip his wing but they felt a net about them. Amongst a party of the better sort, who had gathered about the old trout, the dispute took a different turn. Some were abusing the Crab for an alarmist; whilst others were loading her with compliments as the friend of the people. A powerful party were deliberating about a vote of thanks to the Heron, which was opposed by a few of the more sagacious only, who expressed strong doubts about the honesty of his love for the fishes. The old trout had, meantime, been persevering with monotonous solemnity in a learned harangue, to which many listened because they did not know what else to do; till at length the whole multitude had gathered round him in silent anxiety. After a most learned inquiry into the origin of lakes, the

properties of water, the nature of fishes, and explaining why they could not fly in the air, nor walk upon land, he proposed that they should apply to the Heron to know whether the report was correct, and for his best advice in such an emergency. This plan was agreed to with cheers; and they proceeded to the white rock with as much briskness as if the danger were already over.

"I regret to tell you," said the Heron, "that the news is but too true: I heard the words with my own ears, and I know the men perfectly well. My best advice shall always be at your service; and though I am too old for much exertion, and should prefer retirement to the cares of public life, especially in these days when the purest motives cannot escape suspicion, yet I shall be proud to spend my last hours in defending you from oppression.

"In my youth I have often passed the summer near a beautiful lake on the other side of this mountain, which is surrounded by steep rocks, and is inaccessible to man. With all my infirmities I might contrive to carry three or four of you there

every day; and if, meanwhile, the rest of you keep snug among the reeds and rocks, you may escape the nets of the fishermen till I have carried you to a place of safety."

Nothing could exceed their joy upon hearing this generous offer; and the only difficulty was to decide who should go first. At length they agreed to leave this also to the decision of the Heron, who suggested that as his health was declining it would be better to begin with the largest while he had strength to carry them; because if he got weaker he could still manage the young ones.

How kind! how judicious! they exclaimed; and accordingly the old orator and a few more of the same rank were immediately transported by the Heron to the back of the white rock, and supplied him with a hearty meal.

The old Crab, envious of the popularity of the Heron, and disgusted with the neglect of her own services, had retired to a hole among the rocks, where she was safe alike from the net of fishermen and the intrusion of the people; but when the

migration had now been going on many days, she began to feel melancholy at the loss of all her friends, and was a little annoyed perhaps that she had not been pressed to go with the first party; so she resolved upon following them; and the next time she saw the Heron, requested he would give her his assistance.

Now the Heron had always been a little afraid of her prying disposition, and had once or twice found her waddling about the white rock, as if she thought all was not quite right, and therefore hated her as the only person who was likely to find out his roguery; but he had never known how to get rid of her. So his heart beat with joy when he found that her own folly had put her into his power, and he promised to be ready by break of day; and because she was so heavy he would not then take anybody but her.

Next morning, accordingly, he took her about his neck as if she had been his dearest friend; and notwithstanding her great weight and his own infirmities, made an effort to soar into the air, meaning

to jerk her off and smash her to pieces on the rock; but the great height to which he carried her gave her a full view of the scene of his iniquity, and as soon as she saw the ground strewed with bones she discovered the melancholy fate of her deluded friends. Without a moment's hesitation she grasped him by the throat, which made him turn about, and as soon as they were over the lake she strangled him, and they fell together into the water.

The splash soon drew together the remnant of the misguided inhabitants, when the Crab, mingling lamentations over the departed, with congratulations on the safety of the others, related all that had passed.

Thus we learn two things: that a rogue is at last the victim of his own fraud, and that it is dangerous to run after a change of which we have no certain knowledge.

THE SHEPHERD'S DOG.

A FOX, who was eagerly looking out for plunder, was astonished one morning to see a ravenous Wolf and a fierce Dog strolling along in the most friendly familiarity. As soon as they came up he said, "Well, I have lived to see strange things, and thought I should wonder at nothing; but this sudden friendship between two who have been such foes all their life, does, indeed, astonish me. Pray,

how did it come about?" The Dog replied, "I do not know that it is so much affection for each other as animosity to the shepherd, which is the cause of our union. I need not say much about the old enmity between him and the Wolf; but I must explain my own quarrel with him. Last night my honourable friend, with his native boldness, made free with a miserable lamb, and I, as in duty bound, went in pursuit of him; but he had got so much the start of me that I could not overtake him, and returned. Judge of my indignation when, instead of the usual caresses, I was accused of conniving with the wolf, and got a severe beating. So I left him; and to-night we mean to have good sport with the flock; and I hope to make him repent of his folly."

Friendship is not the only bond of union; and when old foes go hand in hand there is some mischief at the bottom of it.

THE CAMEL AND THE BRAMBLE.

WEARY Camel who had just got rid of his load, and had been turned loose, to pick up a scanty meal in the desert, met at last with a Bramble; but as he opened his lips to take a good mouthful, he discovered a snake coiled up in the midst, and started back in dismay. "So you don't like the thorns!" said the Bramble; "I thought you'd find them too sharp for you." The Camel answered with great contempt, "Quite the contrary; but you have an ugly companion there, that I have no mind to come near; only wait till he is out of the way, and I'll let you see presently whether I care for your thorns."

We often owe to the protection of others that respect which we put down to the score of our own merits.

THE MAN THAT FOUND A HORSESHOE.

A POOR Man picked up a Horseshoe one day, which he carried home, and put by carefully in a cupboard, and next morning set busily to work to make a stable in front of his house. His neighbour, after watching him some time, at length asked him what he was about. "Why, I've found a Horseshoe." "Well, and what of that?" "Why, perhaps I may pick up another to-morrow." "Likely enough; but you won't want a shed to keep 'em in." "No, but then, you see, if I should have the luck to pick up four, who knows but some day I may have the good fortune to find the horse that belongs to them? so I'm getting a stable for him, and next week I mean to lay in some hay." "I like that indeed!" said the neighbour, starting up in a rage;

"and do you suppose that I'm never to be married, and settled in life?" "I hope you may," said the horse-finder, "and that I shall come to the wedding; and by and by, if you should want my horse, you can have it." "Much obliged to you; but suppose I should have a family, do you think your horse is to stand there, and kick my poor children when they are at play?" And thus they went on disputing about the horse, and the children, till from words they came to blows; when the constable, interfering, put them both into the stocks, where he left them to wash their bruises with vinegar, and cure their folly by repentance.

This is no uncommon case with many who think themselves wiser: thousands are daily wasting their strength and time in labouring about improbabilities, or quarrelling about consequences which will never exist but in their own imagination.

THE CAMEL AND THE RAT.

CAMEL chanced to stray into the desert with a bridle dragging under his feet. Whilst occupied in browsing upon some thorns, he was discovered by a Rat, who took the end of the bridle in his teeth, and led the way to his own dwelling. The Camel, with his natural stupidity and submissiveness, instinctively followed the motion of the bridle, till they reached the place where the Rat lived; then the poor little creature found that with every exertion to enlarge the hole, he could not make it fit for the reception of the stranger, and that his inordinate pretensions had involved him in ruin and disgrace.

We may laugh at the silly Rat, but there are many men who waste their means and expose themselves to contempt by the foolish ambition of entertaining persons of rank and consideration.

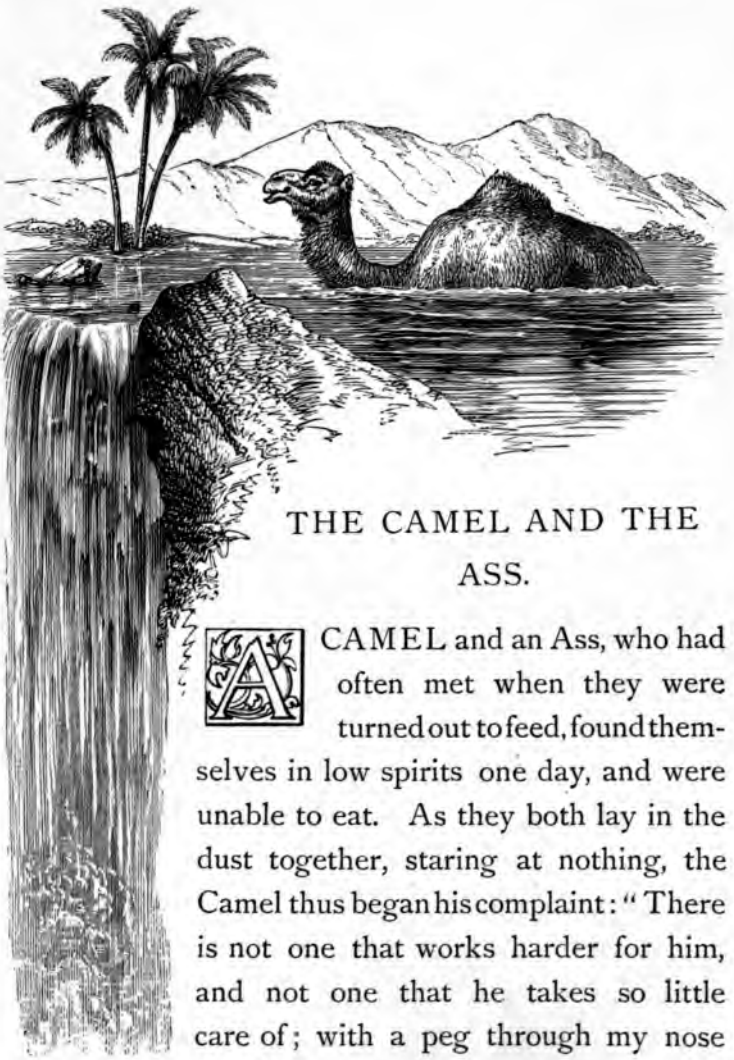
THE CURTAIN AND THE STANDARD.

GAUDY velvet Curtain, with handsome fringe, had just been put up in the palace, and a tattered Standard was hanging, in dust and rags, beside it. "Faugh!" said the Curtain, "what an odious smell of gunpowder! I wonder how the dirty fellow got here?" "Sir," said the Standard, "my rags and dirt are the badges of a life of hardship and danger; and it is to them that I owe the honour of the place which I now hold in this royal hall: nor do I envy you the ease and luxury of a life of repose; for when your beauty shall fade away you will be cast out and forgotten."

Not many days after this an insurrection broke out among the troops, and the palace was plundered; the gaudy Curtain was dragged through the dust, but the tattered Standard was saluted by the insurgents as the emblem of their former victories; and a

feeling of ancient loyalty subduing their violence, they returned to their duty.

It is too often seen that the gay and luxurious find more favour in our eyes than the veteran who is worn out with service; and how often does our pride swell with disgust at the needy and the helpless? But the hour of danger comes, when the merits of men are known; and then pride has a fall; and humility receives honour.



THE CAMEL AND THE ASS.

A CAMEL and an Ass, who had often met when they were turned out to feed, found themselves in low spirits one day, and were unable to eat. As they both lay in the dust together, staring at nothing, the Camel thus began his complaint: "There is not one that works harder for him, and not one that he takes so little care of; with a peg through my nose

I follow him day after day, across the burning desert, with a load of water for his comfort, and all my indulgence is, leave to pick up a few thorns after the day's march, and to moisten my parched throat with a little stale water that I conceal in my own stomach, and if they want to make a feast when the perilous journey is over, my throat must be cut for the sacrifice. I'll have nothing more to do with them." The Ass replied with as heavy a burthen of complaint against the cruelty and selfishness of the tyrants who had usurped this authority over their natural freedom, and almost winced under his own description of the ill usage that he had endured. And thus they continued at intervals through the heat of the day, each striving to surpass the other in a melancholy account of his sufferings, till they felt the hour was at hand when they should be fetched back to their bondage; so they ceased their complaints, and the Ass readily agreed to the Camel's proposal, that they should run away, and pass the rest of their days in the enjoyments of friendship and repose. It was not long

before they heard the angry shouts of their pursuers, whose threats did but recall their sorrows to remembrance, and give fresh vigour to their speed. At length they reached the bank of a river: the Camel advanced, and finding the water came up to his shoulder only, called out to the Ass, "Come on; don't be afraid; it is only up to the shoulder!" "That may be," said the Ass; "but what reaches your shoulder would be over my head."

While the Ass was yet deliberating whether he should attempt to swim across (for he was not fond of water), his master came up and put an end to his doubts; and the Camel, taking alarm, rushed out of his depth, and not being able to swim, was carried down the stream, and perished.

When we attempt to run away from the troubles of that state of life to which we are adapted by Providence, we fall into others that we are not prepared for.

THE AMBITIOUS CRANE.

THERE was an old washerman, who used to pass all his days by the side of a river, and knew neither work nor pleasure, beyond that of beating the clothes of the villagers upon a large stone on the bank, and then rinsing them in a stream; and there was an aged Crane, who never failed also to pass the whole day in the same place, picking up the worms and insects in the mud, so that they became familiar, and were seldom seen apart. One day a hawk happened to fly across in pursuit of a lark, which he quickly pounced upon, and bore off in his talons. The Crane was amazed at the audacity and success of a bird so much smaller than himself, and felt quite disgraced, to think that with such long legs and neck, and a body ten times as big, he should go on groping in the mud for worms; so he resolved to seek higher game. Shortly after

he had taken this resolution, a pigeon passed by, and the Crane set off in pursuit of her, imitating as far as he was able all the actions of the hawk; but before he had got high enough to make a fine descent, the pigeon had lighted upon the bank, and the Crane hastily dropping upon her, broke both his legs in the violence of the fall.

The wisest thing we can do, is to follow the pursuits that belong to our station, and be content with the proper exercise of our particular talents.

THE GROCER AND THE RAT.

A KIND-HEARTED Grocer had a favourite Rat, who was always running about his shop, and helping himself to the best of everything; the good man was often amused at the cunning tricks of the little animal, and the familiarity that grew up between them drew many customers to the shop. But it is an old saying, that if you indulge the base they grow insolent. One day, when he had feasted on sweetmeats till he was tired, he took a fancy to the Grocer's purse; and watching his opportunity, when the good man took his nap in the heat of the day, he gnawed the strings, and carried it off.

The first customer that came in the evening wanted change, and the poor Grocer was half wild on discovering his loss. He saw at once who was the thief, and contrived to catch him in one of the

jars; then tying a string to his leg, he let him go again, and thus ascertained the depth and direction of his hole, upon which he began to dig, and recovered the purse, but punished the perfidious thief with the death he deserved.

To encourage the unworthy is to promote vice; and ingratitude to the benevolent ends in disgrace.

THE FOX AND THE HYÆNA.

A FOX had the misfortune to fall into the clutches of a Hyæna. He began, in a piteous tone, to call for mercy, and to entreat that he would release him from his fangs, making the strongest appeals to his clemency, and urging, as a last argument, that he would find him nothing but skin and bones, not worth the trouble of eating; to all which the Hyæna gave this short answer: "Just as much pity as you showed the chicken yesterday."

We are rarely sensible of the full extent of our own misconduct till we are made to feel the effects of it in receiving the same treatment from others.

THE CROW AND THE MONKEYS.

A GANG of pilfering Monkeys went off on an expedition to the hill-country, and were there overtaken by the sudden arrival of winter. As frost was a thing they had never heard of, they all thought, poor creatures, that they had got the ague, and sat shivering and shaking all night, each with his head in his hand, as if he expected it to fall off with the chattering of his teeth. As soon as the

sun was up, they set off towards home. In the evening, when they halted, they saw the rays of the setting sun playing upon a bit of looking-glass, and were quite delighted; for they thought it was a fire which some traveller had left; so the whole troop ran about to collect dry grass and wood, which they heaped upon what they had mistaken for embers, and then kept puffing and fanning till they were quite tired. An old Crow, who was perched upon a tree, close by, and had observed their proceedings, was moved with pity at all their fruitless labour, and kindly explained their mistake; but they were quite affronted at her thinking them so silly, and only grinned in her face, upon which the Crow, partly to save them further labour, and partly to prove herself right, came down with the design of pulling out the bit of glass; but no sooner had she inserted her head into the sticks, than they all fell upon her in a rage and tore her to pieces.

Those who intrude their advice upon fools, or offer proofs to the headstrong, will meet with more rough usage than thanks for their pains.

THE PEACOCK AND THE CHOUGH.

A PEACOCK and a Chough met one fine day in a garden, and, after walking about together a little while, fell at last into a fierce dispute. The Peacock began; "When I look at your dingy coat, I cannot help wondering how you came by such beautiful hose; there must have been a mistake, surely, at the creation, when you put on my stockings of scarlet silk, and left me your black leather gaiters."

The Chough contemptuously replied, "If there was a mistake, it must have been that you purloined my laced coat and velvet waistcoat, and I was forced to put up with your fustian jacket, which ought to go, I'm sure, with your ugly jack-boots."

A hermit who overheard them, sighed and said, "Those defects which should teach us humility, are often a cause of jealousy and discontent."

THE ROSE AND THE CLAY.

NE of the most eminent authors and philosophers has told the following little fable, in order to illustrate the great advantages which are to be derived from keeping company with the wise and virtuous.

"As I entered the bath one day, a friend presented me with a piece of perfumed clay. I was so pleased with the rare odour that I exclaimed, "In what favoured region of the earth wast thou found? I am enraptured with thy heavenly fragrance."

It modestly replied, "I am nothing but common clay, but I had the good fortune to lie for many years at the foot of a Rose-bush, and the sweet influence of so close an intimacy has produced this effect upon me which you admire; or else, in truth, I should have been nothing but a lump of worthless clay, as is my nature."

And what art thou, O man! if thou dost not partake of the secret influence of a purer Being?—worthless clay! ay, and worse than worthless—a mass of poison and corruption. Let the Christian learn humility and gratitude from this lesson of the Mahometan.

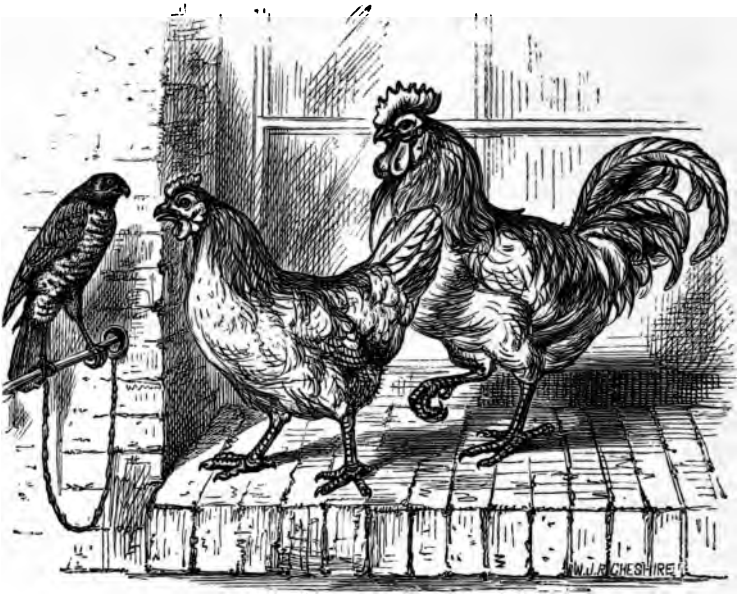
THE DERVISE AND THE RAVEN.

A VERY pious Dervise, who worked hard to gain a scanty living, being once upon a journey, sat down to rest himself at the foot of a tree. While he was moistening his dry crust in the rivulet, and meditating upon the wonderful ways of Providence, as displayed in supplying the wants of all creatures, his attention was attracted by a strange fluttering over his head. When he looked up he saw a Raven, who was tearing a piece of flesh to pieces, and with kind solicitude feeding a poor little unfledged Hawk. He sat a long time observing the birds, and then began to think that there was no use in labouring as he did for his daily bread. "Why," said he to himself, "should I fret and fatigue myself, and put up with the ill-usage of mankind, when I have so kind and bountiful a Creator to depend upon?"

So he came home, and gave up all the means

that he had followed to gain a living by, and devoted the whole of his time to prayer and meditation, but the food that he looked for never came, and he was soon brought, with the whole of his family, to a state of miserable want, so that they must have starved to death, if an industrious carpenter who lived in the neighbourhood, and heard of their distress, had not afforded them relief.

Then it was that the Dervise saw the mistake which he had made in reading the lesson Providence had set him, and confessed with shame that it was the example of the laborious and benevolent Raven which he ought to have followed, not that of the helpless and dependent Hawk.



THE HAWK AND THE FOWL.

A HAWK fell into dispute with a barn-door Fowl, and said to her, "Thou ungrateful creature, see how kind man is to thee! thou hast full liberty to roam about, plenty to eat, a good roosting-place, and if I do but look at thy children, thou hast only to give the alarm, and the very boys

and maids run out to defend thee; and yet if they want to catch thee, thou wilt run, clacking and screaming, into every corner to avoid them: whilst I, who am chained to my perch, half fed, and only brought out for their own amusement, come down at a call, and sit on their wrist." "My good sir," said Dame Partlett, "I've a notion you never saw a Hawk upon a spit; but that has been the end of all my family for many generations: so that I know pretty well how to value the favours which we receive at the hand of man."

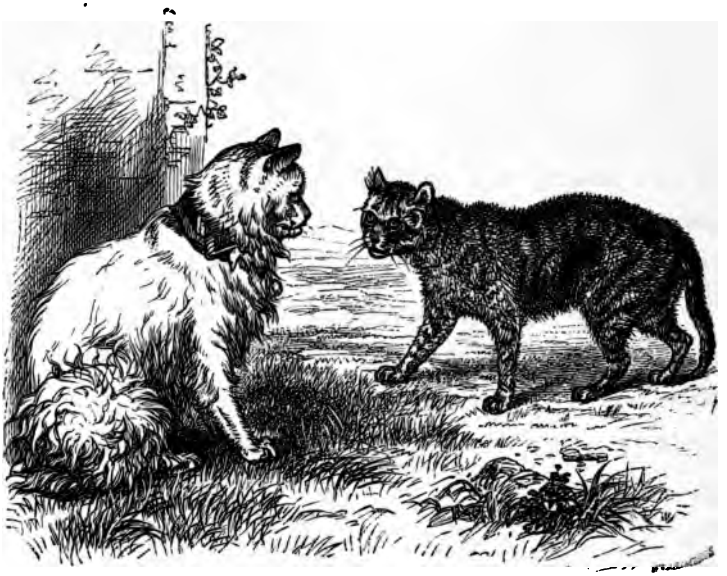
We are very apt to say, "Well, if I were such a person, I'm sure I would not behave as he does." But we never can tell how we should act till we find ourselves placed in the same situation: it is enough if we do what is right in our own station.

THE FRIGHTENED BOY.

ONE of the Kings of Persia was once sailing for his amusement, and among his attendants there was a lad who had never before been at sea. As soon as the vessel began to pitch a little, and the waves dashed against her sides, the Boy burst into tears, and all their efforts to pacify him could not put a stop to his screams. The King felt so vexed, that all the pleasure of the excursion was destroyed, till one of the courtiers offered to make the Boy hold his tongue, if he might be allowed to follow his own way. "Do what you like," said the King, "only keep him quiet, for he distracts me." Upon this, the courtier whispered to some of the sailors, who suddenly laying hold of the Boy, chucked him overboard, and immediately threw out

a rope. After a plunge or two, the Boy caught hold of the rope, and earnestly entreated that they would take him on board ; and as soon as they had done so, he sat down in a corner and was quiet for the rest of the day.

How often does groundless alarm destroy our enjoyment ; and few men know how to value safety till they have been exposed to danger.



THE GREEDY CAT.

A MISERABLE starving Cat, which belonged to a poor old woman, who had nothing to give her to eat, was crawling about one day to see what she could pick up; by chance she strayed into the King's garden, where she met with another cat, basking on a sunny bank, and so sleek and plump that she stood still in amazement. At length, unable

to conceal her feelings, she said, "Pardon my intrusion, and tell me by what good fortune you enjoy all this luxury and ease, while I am wasted by fasting and watching to a mere skeleton?" "Why, to be sure," replied the other, "you seem to be in a woful condition, and it moves my pity: pray where do you live?" The poor Cat then, with great humility, told the history of her life, and all the hardships she suffered in the hut of the old woman.

The other, with a demure look of consequence replied, "It is all your own fault for living in such obscurity; you should push your fortune at court, and you might do as well as others. Wait here till the evening, and I will introduce you to the King's kitchen, where you shall feast to your heart's content." So in the evening they repaired to the kitchen, and the poor Cat was overwhelmed with joy and surprise at the sight of a profusion of the daintiest food. But the cook had been so much molested of late by the visits of a great many cats, that he resolved to put a stop to their tricks: so he ordered the scullion to watch for them; and no

sooner did the fat courtier and his starving companion appear, than they were attacked with sticks and stones on every side.

The poor Cat fled with as much speed as her weakness would allow, and returned to the old woman's hut, with this reflection — Poverty may have its hardships; but wealth and greatness have their troubles and alarms: whole bones are better than a sleek skin.

THE MODEST RAINDROP.

A DROP of Rain fell from a passing cloud into the sea. He was astonished and confused at finding himself floating on the bosom of the boundless ocean. "Alas! alas!" was his exclamation, "that one so mean and worthless should dare to mingle with the billows of the mighty deep." Just then an oyster opened his shell: the drop took refuge in this retreat, from that greatness of which he felt himself unworthy, and there grew into a pearl, which became in time the richest ornament of a monarch's crown.

Perhaps this little book, unfit to struggle in the great waters of literature, and dropping aside into some silent pool of obscurity, may find shelter in the recesses of some poetic mind, and come forth again in a future age to receive the applause of its transmuted lustre.